

2/28/21

State Legislators,

Hello, my name is Alison Foito, I am a resident of Fairfield and support House bill 6517. I want to share with you the journey my family and my daughter has gone on since we got her dyslexia diagnosis in 3rd grade. My dyslexic daughter is not in 7th grade but her journey with reading started in kindergarten. Grace started receiving reading intervention in kindergarten and looking back I realize that if her wonderful teachers had training in dyslexia and what to look for, she might have gotten help earlier than half-way through 3rd grade.

Grace loved to read and loved school and was doing great in school and then she started 3rd grade. In 3rd grade it became apparent that all the reading strategies she had learned in the previous years were no longer working. However, there was no urgency by her teacher to consider testing for her at the start of that school year. Even though there was a meeting with me, the school psychologist and the classroom teacher. The teacher wanted to put off testing till after the winter benchmark testing was done. Third grade became a constant battle with Grace to even try reading and to do schoolwork, her frustration level was at maximum.

She was finally tested in the middle of 3rd grade and received her diagnosis of dyslexia however it was too late. She hated reading and never wanted to pick up a book again. She was overwhelmed with chapter books and all the words on the page and to this day she will not pick up regular chapter books that most middle schoolers are reading. She is in the middle of 7th grade and is on a reading level of a student at the end of 5th grade.

Looking back on our experience I can see that if her k-3 teachers as well as her reading specialists had training in dyslexia and what to look for things could have been different, and she may like to read. Considering dyslexia affects 1 in 5 kids, we need to all we can to provide early screening and diagnosis so that students are feeling like they are worthless. Providing training for educators in the area of dyslexia as well as structured literacy programs that have been proven to work with all children.

Structured literacy teaches systematic word identification and decoding strategies. Which are proven to work with students and especially those with dyslexia. Having teachers in the classroom that have been trained in dyslexia and structured literacy can help with identifying children early and get them the support they need. Grace had wonderful, experienced teachers early on in school, but she also had new teacher fresh out of college and looking back if that teacher had training in dyslexia or structured literacy Grace may have gotten diagnosed a year earlier which could have had a huge impact.

Another reason I support and implore you to pass this bill is that Grace's younger sister also showed signs of a learning disability, but she got tested in 2nd grade due to having an experienced teacher that saw her struggles and knew that getting her help was needed. Studies show that the earlier a child with dyslexia is diagnosed and receives the right services the better they will do in school.

In conclusion, it is important for the future of our children that this bill get passed so we can support those students who will benefit from early diagnosis and teachers that know what dyslexia and structured literacy are.

Sincerely,

Alison Foito